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John Fondas

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Sailors' Valentines

John Fondas : Sailors' Valentines before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sailors' Valentines:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A beautiful book!By Mountain Mama StudioI was more than pleased when I received this book. The octagonal format was perfectly suited. I was sorry to read the one negative review which only reflected that reviewer's moral judgment. These were souvenirs purchased by SAILORS! Why was she surprised?6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Rare and Amazing and Beautiful...Not Just For ExpertsBy TerrieThis is SUCH a cool book and one that it about a very rare and beautiful subject...sailors' valentines. Sailors' Valentines are a rare and unique artform from the mid-1800s. Perhaps made by sailors as tokens of love for wives, mothers and girlfriends and with ample evidence to support this theory, the valentines also appear to have been made for sale in Barbados, a port of call for both American and English ships. They are between 8 and 15 inches across. They are octagonal shaped wooden boxes usually made of Spanish cedar, but sometimes of mahogany. They are hinged at the side to open as a book would open. Inside, protected by glass, are incredibly detailed and colorful mosaics made of sea-shells, sometimes with sentiments spelled out, the names of the sailor artists, even in one case an erotic photograph framed by an elaborate mosaic of shells. They are, of course, highly collectable and have fetched prices as high as \$35,000 a piece. Antique experts know about them but most of the rest of us have never heard of them and that is a pity. This incredible book is such a marvel in itself, well crafted, detailed, scholarly and very beautiful. It comes in its own case which is a deep blue fabric covered octagon-shaped hinged box. The book inside is

also octagon-shaped and contains the history of these remarkable treasures as well as dozens of actual size photographs in full color of the valentines themselves. There is a chart that identifies the various types of sea-shells that were used to create the valentines. The valentines are displayed on facing pages so it is as though you have actually opened one of the hinged boxes and are looking at an actual valentine as it would appear were you holding it in your own hands. I think this book will be treasured by art lovers, crafty people, romantic people, as well as by antique collectors and enthusiasts. It would make a really stunning Valentine's Day gift. Don't miss it. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Old Nautical Valentines By Gregory Coffin Wash and dry your hands thoroughly before opening John Fondas's presentation book entitled "Sailors' Valentines". To open the cloth covered box and discover the eight-sided book is like having a hands-on experience with true Victorian sailors' valentines. When laid flat you can see both sides of a hinged nine inch valentine just as it would appear in your hands. The text describing the origin of these valentines, their particular shells, rarity and beauty, is accurate and very interesting. Mr. Fondas has presented us with a five star book of highest integrity. As a maker, collector, teacher, restorer and student of early mosaic valentines, I will cherish this volume as a most important adjunct to and validation of my own work. All who have walked the beaches picking up shells and taking the few special specimens home to add beauty to a dresser or porch railing will find this book romantic, inspirational, and beautiful. And, I suspect, grandma's attic will get another search. Perhaps with luck an eight-sided wooden box might be found. Enjoy. Nancy S. Coffin

The story of Sailors' Valentines evokes romance-majestic sailing ships and long sea voyages, adventures in the New World, and daydreams of loved ones across wide oceans. It has been said that sailors made the Valentines at sea for cherished friends and family to pass the time and to bestow as gifts upon their return. Very rare and highly collectible, Sailors' Valentines are octagonal wooden boxes made of Spanish cedar or mahogany. They contain intricate, stunning mosaics made primarily of colorful shells and often incorporate sentimental messages. The mosaics are covered in glass and often hinged together in pairs. When closed, the shell work is hidden and the glass protected so that the Valentines can be stored safely for travel. Now fetching extraordinary prices at auction and antiques fairs-as much as \$35,000-they were actually made by craftsmen at the height of the Victorian Age in Barbados, a familiar port of call for many American and European ships. Now, for the first time ever, these highly prized and rarely seen antiques are presented at almost life size in this innovative and stunning package that mirrors the shape of an actual Valentine. Here are over fifty magnificent examples, photographed especially for this book and beautifully reproduced in detail. Page after page, this octagonal volume, which comes in a deluxe cloth keepsake box, captures the experience of holding one of these magnificent treasures in your hands. Avid collector John Fondas shares his expertise on the history, making, and collecting of Valentines in his introductory essay as well as provides a detailed listing of the shells used in their construction. A collectible itself, Sailors' Valentines will delight shell collectors, antiques lovers, Victorian fans, and romantics of all ages.

About the Author John Fondas is a professional jeweler with an active interest in eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century shell work and jewelry. An avid collector of Sailors' Valentines for many years, he is currently at work on a book on nineteenth- and twentieth-century jewelry. He divides his time between Nassau and Harbor Island in the Bahamas, where he sits on the newly-formed government board of antiquities and monuments.